

A Brief Report on Adult Abuse Registries

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States design adult abuse registries to help protect adults and the elderly from abuse, neglect or exploitation by care givers.. The registries contain the names of service providers who have engaged in abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Employers use the registries to check the background of potential employees.

In order to gather information on how Kentucky might best establish and implement a registry of all long-term care service workers who have abused or neglected vulnerable adults under their care, we attempted to contact agencies in 19 states that the American Bar Association (2006) had identified as having such a registry. We interviewed by phone individuals from appropriate agencies in each state, and asked six questions in reference to their state's registry:

1. In which agency is your state's registry located?
2. How is it funded, and roughly what does it cost per year?
3. Have there been any difficulties while managing it?

Examples: Getting abusers on the registry or ensuring non-abusers are off the registry.

4. What technologies are used in managing and posting the registry?
5. Who has access to it, and how is it accessed?
6. What have been the outcomes, both positive and negative, if any?

These responses were then recorded, compiled, and summarized.

We received feedback from 14 states, each of which has a registry currently operating. Most states operate Adult Abuse Registries through units in general departments like Health and Human Services, and some place it in a specific division for Adult Protective Services. Of the thirteen states that responded to our queries, nine rely solely on state general fund appropriations to operate the registry. One supplemented the state money with federal money. One state, Utah,

relies on federal funds. Utah operates its registry as part of its nurse's aide competency training and evaluation program. The federal government provides a 50 percent match under 42 C.F.R. § 433.15. We were unable to determine how two states fund their registries.

All Adult Abuse Registries are database operated; some databases are linked to Child Abuse Registries and therefore had access not only within the Division, but also for an Assistant Attorney General or State Police Departments. Access to these was very restricted. Most databases are accessed online through a log-in process. All Adult Abuse Registries have limited administrative access administratively, but all allow employment checks by employers. Some states allow the general public to access the information and example of public record was found in Delaware (<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dltcrp/Default.aspx>). Generally, states substantiate abuse, neglect or exploitation through investigations and an appeal process before offenders are placed on the registry (http://dcf.vermont.gov/child_protection_registry_adults).

Most registry use is for employment checks in hiring caretaking staff. Some states charge for their services, such as background checks. The states had little data on outcomes. Most responses were positive in that these registries are needed and offer a protective service. Some states voiced concerns on behalf of social workers acting as untrained investigators on adult abuse cases, and problems with in-take and standardization of information across multiple departments and divisions that access the database.

The Nebraska website, <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/nea/cr.htm>, provides a very good description of a typical abuse registry and how it operates.

References

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